

ten years on the edge

**VERTIGO**

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**NEW STORYLINE**

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STEVE LEIALOHA

SUGGESTED FOR  
MATURE READERS  
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**N**ORTHERN SASKATCHEWAN  
IN MARCH.

WINTER COMES EARLY  
AND STAYS LATE HERE.

IT'S NOT  
FAR TO THE  
TURNOFF  
NOW.

AS SOON AS  
WE FINISH ROUNDING  
LAC LA PLONGE, WE'LL  
CONNECT WITH HIGHWAY  
155, WHICH WILL TAKE US  
SOUTH INTO PRINCE  
ALBERT BY  
BREAKFAST.

AND THEN  
SASKATOON BY  
LUNCHTIME, IF WE  
DON'T RUN INTO  
TRAFFIC.

I DON'T KNOW  
ANY OF THOSE NAMES.  
WHEN DO WE REACH  
FABLETOWN?

# OUT OF THE WOODS

## CHAPTER ONE • MARCH OF THE WOODEN SOLDIERS

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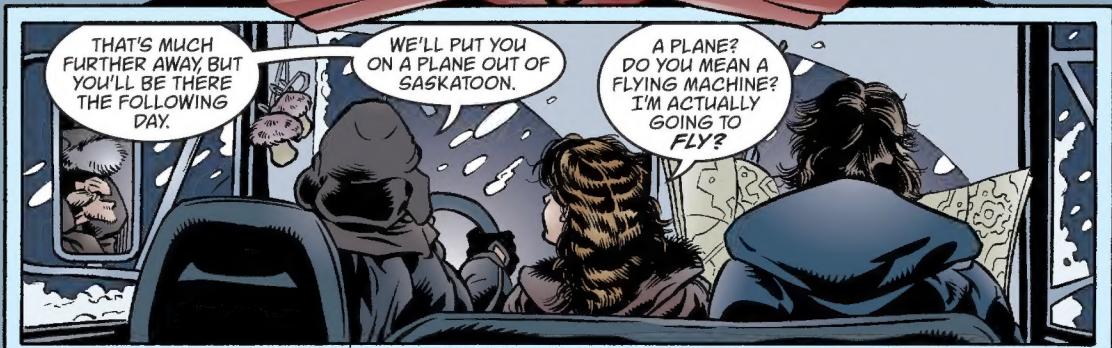
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THAT'S MUCH FURTHER AWAY, BUT YOU'LL BE THERE THE FOLLOWING DAY.

WE'LL PUT YOU ON A PLANE OUT OF SASKATOON.

A PLANE? DO YOU MEAN A FLYING MACHINE? I'M ACTUALLY GOING TO FLY?



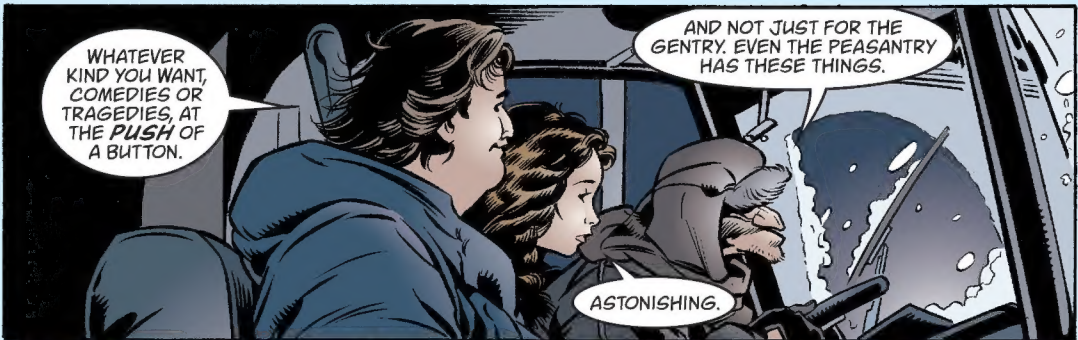
OF COURSE. DON'T WORRY, IT'S SAFE ENOUGH. EVERYONE DOES IT.

THEY WERE RIGHT. THIS IS A LAND OF MIRACLES.



YOU DON'T KNOW THE HALF OF IT. PEOPLE CAN TALK TO EACH OTHER FROM ACROSS THE GLOBE, FOR LESS THAN THE COST OF A SINGLE MEAL.

AND EVERY HOUSE HAS A BOX THAT PLAYS MUSIC AND ANOTHER BOX THAT GATHERS INFORMATION AND ANOTHER BOX FOR-- WELL, I GUESS YOU MIGHT DESCRIBE IT AS ENDLESS PUPPET SHOWS.



WHATEVER KIND YOU WANT, COMEDIES OR TRAGEDIES, AT THE PUSH OF A BUTTON.

AND NOT JUST FOR THE GENTRY. EVEN THE PEASANTRY HAS THESE THINGS.

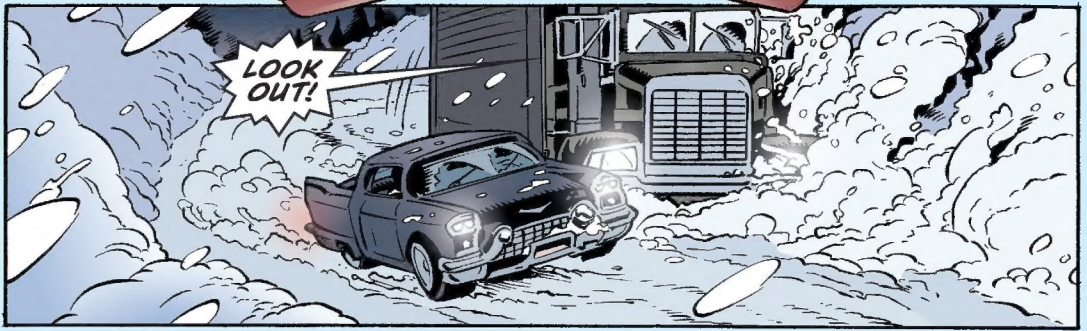
ASTONISHING.



AND YET WE CALL THIS THE MUNDANE WORLD.

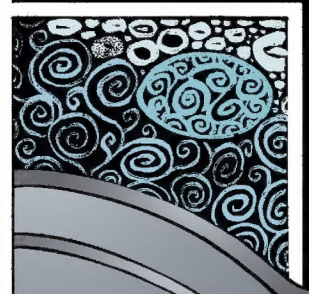








AND WHILE SPRING IS STILL WEEKS OR MONTHS AWAY IN THE FAR NORTH, IT'S ALREADY MADE ITS FIRST SHY APPEARANCE IN NEW YORK.



HUH?

IS SOMEONE THERE?



HELLO?



IF  
SOMEONE'S  
HERE, YOU'D  
BETTER SPEAK  
UP.



IT'S  
JUST ME,  
SNOW.

COLIN!  
YOU  
NEARLY  
SCARED THE  
LIFE OUT  
OF ME.



WHAT ARE  
YOU *DOING*  
HERE  
IN THE MIDDLE OF  
THE NIGHT?

I DIDN'T  
MEAN TO WAKE  
YOU.

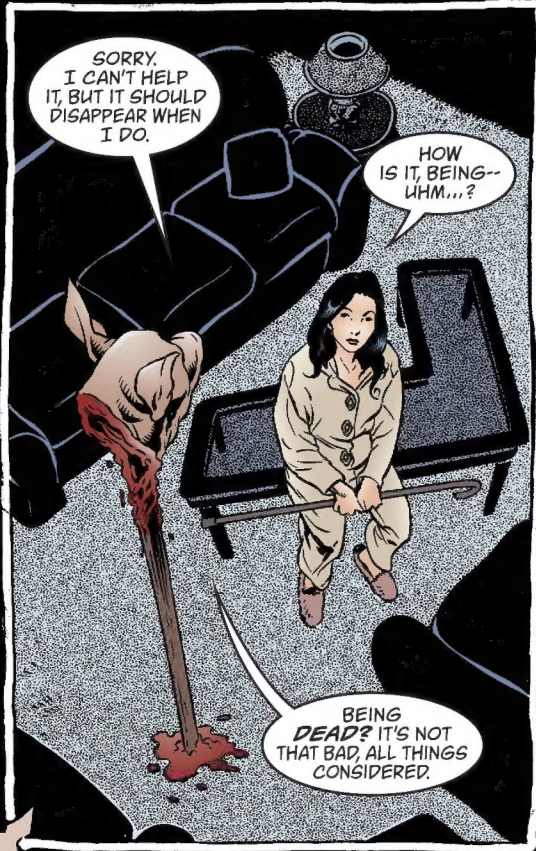
YOU'RE  
DRIPPING  
BLOOD  
ALL  
OVER MY  
CARPET.



SORRY.  
I CAN'T HELP  
IT, BUT IT SHOULD  
DISAPPEAR WHEN  
I DO.

HOW  
IS IT, BEING--  
UHM...?

BEING  
DEAD? IT'S NOT  
THAT BAD, ALL THINGS  
CONSIDERED.







HOW'RE THINGS HERE AND UPSTATE? HOW'RE THE NEW LITTLE PIGS DOING?

OKAY, I GUESS. ROSE IS RUNNING THE FARM NOW, SO I DON'T GET UP THERE MUCH.



WELL, YOU WILL. YOU'LL *HAVE* TO, ONCE YOUR *BABIES* ARE BORN.

BABIES? PLURAL?

YOU KNOW-- SINCE THEY WON'T BE ALLOWED TO STAY DOWN HERE.



WHAT DO YOU MEAN? WHY *WOULDN'T* THEY--?



WE CAN'T TALK ABOUT THAT NOW, SNOW. I DON'T KNOW HOW LONG I'LL BE ABLE TO STAY, AND I NEED TO *WARN* YOU.



ABOUT *WHAT?*



THINGS ARE GOING TO GET BAD SOON. *REAL* BAD. NOT JUST FOR YOU, BUT FOR ALL OF FABLETOWN.



MAYBE EVEN FOR THE MUNDYS TOO, IF YOU'RE UNABLE TO STOP IT.

I DON'T UNDERSTAND. *WHAT'S* GOING TO HAPPEN?



"TERRIBLE THINGS ARE ON THE WAY."







AND IT'S GOING TO TAKE ALL OF YOU TO STOP IT--TO SURVIVE IT.

STOP WHAT? WHY ARE YOU BEING SO DAMNNED CRYPTIC? GIVE ME SOME DETAILS.



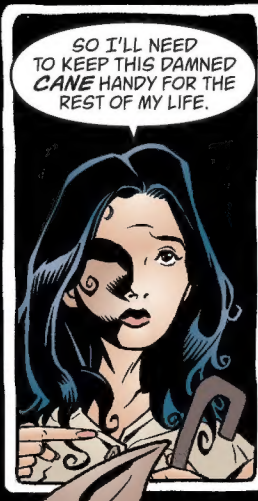
I DON'T HAVE ANY. I'VE TOLD YOU EVERYTHING I KNOW.

SCANT HELP YOU ARE.



I WISH I HAD MORE TO TELL YOU. I'M GLAD YOU MADE IT, SNOW. I'M GLAD TO SEE YOU'VE RECOVERED.

NOT ENTIRELY. I GET BLINDING HEADACHES AND BOUTS OF DIZZINESS.



SO I'LL NEED TO KEEP THIS DAMNNED CANE HANDY FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE.



STILL, IT'S BETTER THAN A POKE IN THE SEVERED-HEAD WITH A SHARP STICK.



THERE IS THAT.

I HAVE TO GO NOW.

TRY HARD TO REMEMBER WHAT I SAID WHEN YOU WAKE UP.



WHAT THE HELL--?

COLIN?





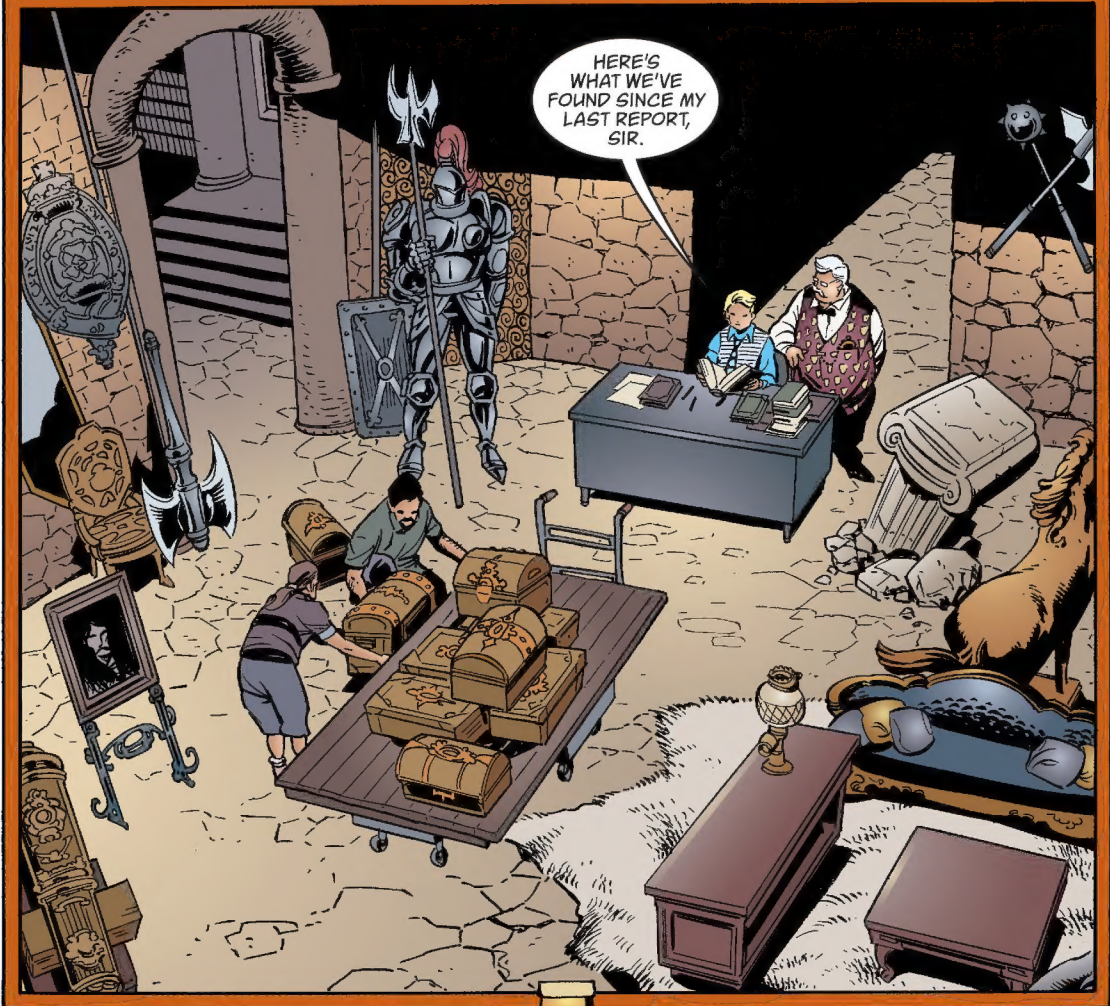
=YAWN=

MORNING, FLYCATCHER.

MORNING, GRIMBLE. HAS BLUE BOY OPENED UP THE OFFICE YET?

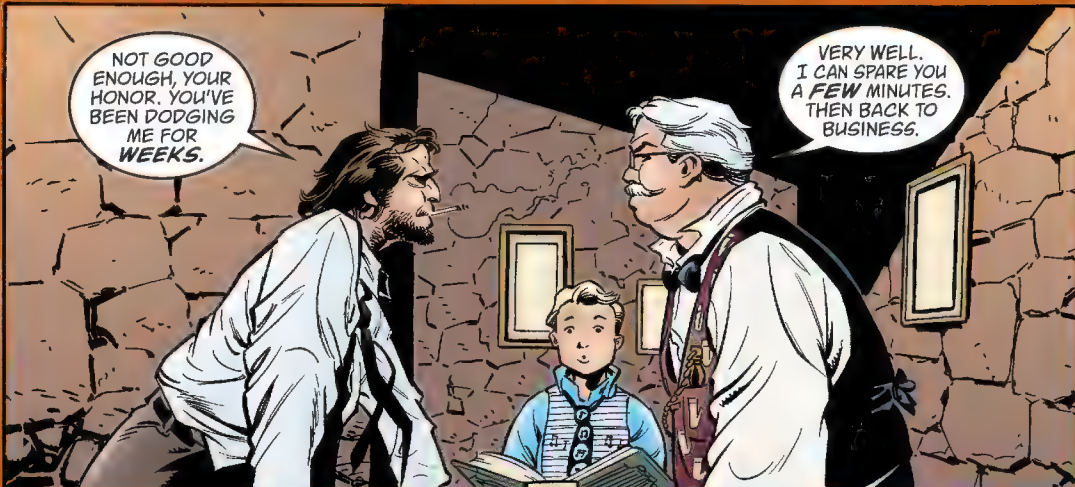
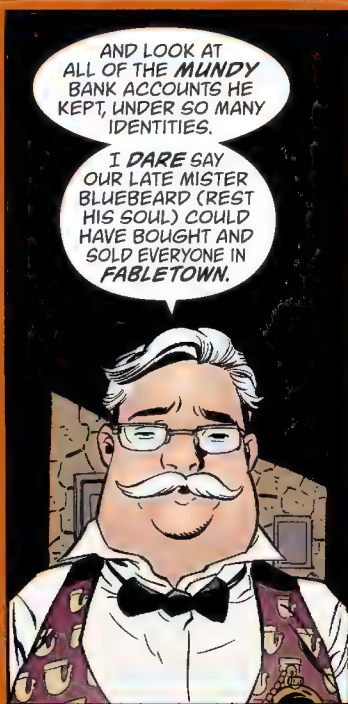
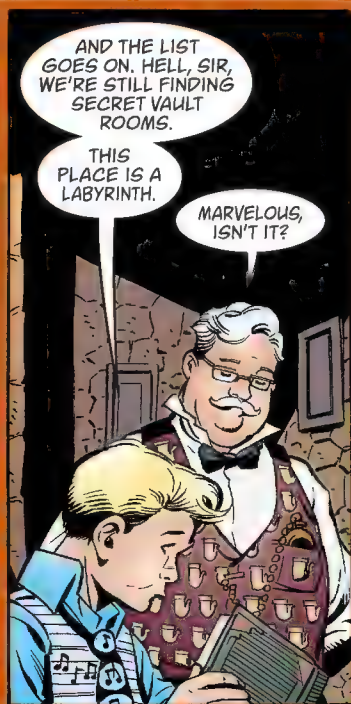
NOPE. YOU'LL HAVE TO LET YOURSELF IN.

THEY'RE STILL IN BLUE-BEARD'S DIGGS, CATALOGUING HIS LOOT. THEY'VE BEEN AT IT ALL NIGHT.

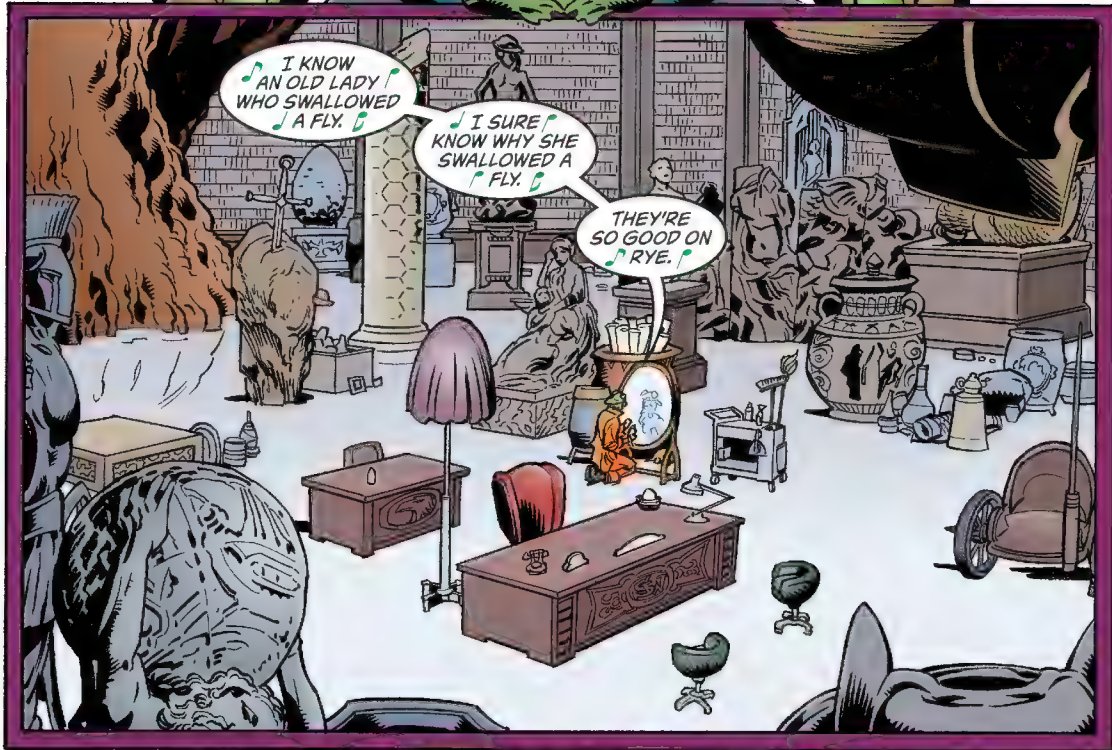


HERE'S WHAT WE'VE FOUND SINCE MY LAST REPORT, SIR.









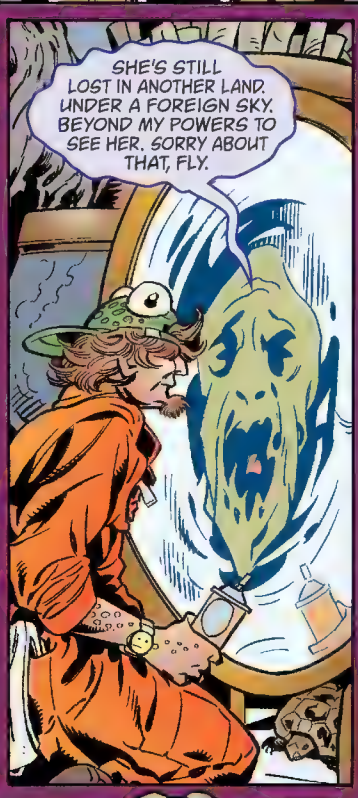
I KNOW  
AN OLD LADY  
WHO SWALLOWED  
A FLY.

I SURE  
KNOW WHY SHE  
SWALLOWED A  
FLY.

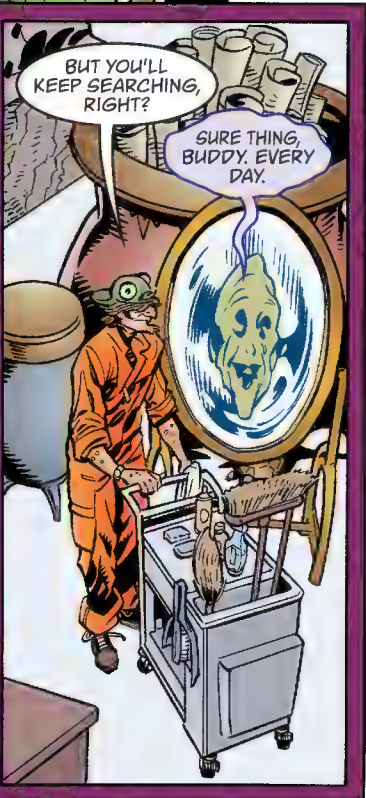
THEY'RE  
SO GOOD ON  
RYE.



MIRROR, MIRROR  
ON THE FLOOR, CAN'T YOU  
STILL NOT FIND MY WIFE  
NO MORE?



SHE'S STILL  
LOST IN ANOTHER LAND.  
BEYOND MY POWERS TO  
SEE HER. SORRY ABOUT  
THAT, FLY.



BUT YOU'LL  
KEEP SEARCHING,  
RIGHT?

SURE THING,  
BUDDY. EVERY  
DAY.





YOU LET PRINCE CHARMING GET AWAY WITH **KILLING BLUEBEARD**.

I DID **NO SUCH THING**.



I CONVENED AN OFFICIAL HEARING, WHERE HE WAS FORMALLY CHARGED WITH THE CRIME OF **PRE-MEDITATED MURDER**.

HOWEVER, LACKING ANY **EVIDENCE** TO CONTEST HIS CLAIM OF SELF-DEFENSE, I HAD NO RECOURSE OTHER THAN TO FIND HIM **NOT GUILTY**.

ALL OF WHICH WAS DONE WITH MAXIMUM EXPEDITION, SO THAT YOU COULD ALL GET TO THE MUCH MORE **VITAL BUSINESS** OF COUNTING UP HIS **LOOT**.

TREAD **CAREFULLY**, WOLF.

I WAS GOING TO GET BLUEBEARD LEGALLY. I WAS BUILDING A CASE AGAINST HIM THAT WOULD HAVE PROVED HE CONTINUED TO EXTORT MONEY OUT OF FABLES HE RESCUED LONG **AFTER** SIGNING ONTO THE GENERAL AMNESTY.

A CASE THAT YOU'VE BEEN BUILDING FOR **HOW MANY YEARS**, WITHOUT FINDING ANY ADMISSIBLE EVIDENCE?

WORKING WITHIN THE LAW TAKES TIME.

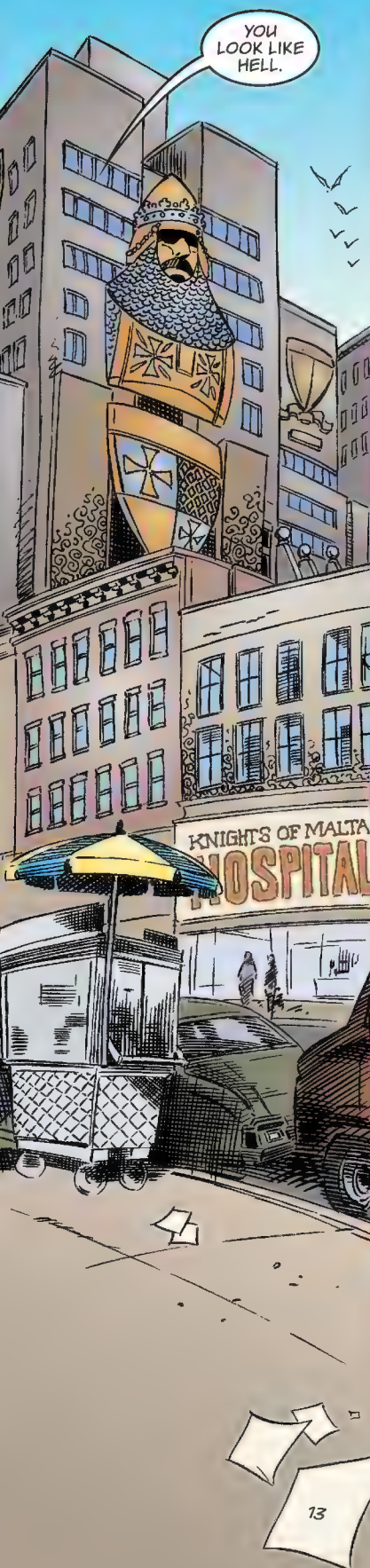
SO CHARMING SAVED YOU ADDITIONAL **YEARS** OF EFFORT.

ACCEPT IT AND MOVE ON.

MISS WHITE TELLS ME YOU'RE **ADEQUATE** ENOUGH IN YOUR DUTIES. DON'T FORCE ME TO START QUESTIONING HER JUDGMENT.







YOU LOOK LIKE HELL.



IS THAT A MEDICAL OPINION?

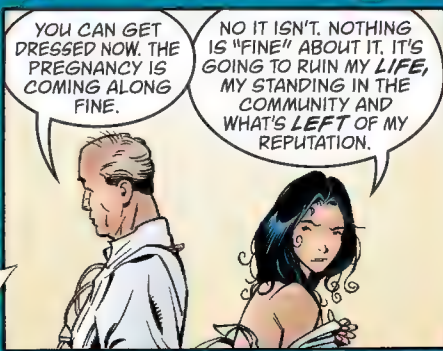
STRICTLY AN OBSERVATION, MISS WHITE.

I DIDN'T SLEEP WELL LAST NIGHT. BAD DREAMS.



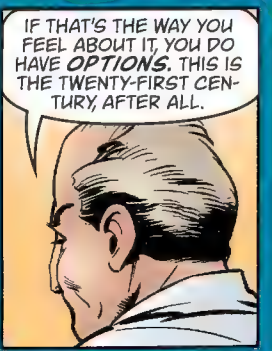
ANYTHING YOU NEED TO TELL ME ABOUT?

I WOULD IF I COULD REMEMBER, BUT IT'S ALL A BLUR. PROBABLY JUST A BIT OF BAD PORK I ATE YESTERDAY.



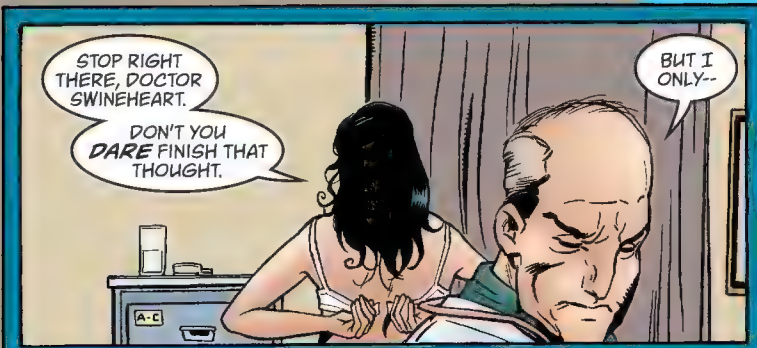
YOU CAN GET DRESSED NOW. THE PREGNANCY IS COMING ALONG FINE.

NO IT ISN'T. NOTHING IS "FINE" ABOUT IT. IT'S GOING TO RUIN MY LIFE, MY STANDING IN THE COMMUNITY AND WHAT'S LEFT OF MY REPUTATION.



IF THAT'S THE WAY YOU FEEL ABOUT IT, YOU DO HAVE OPTIONS. THIS IS THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY, AFTER ALL.

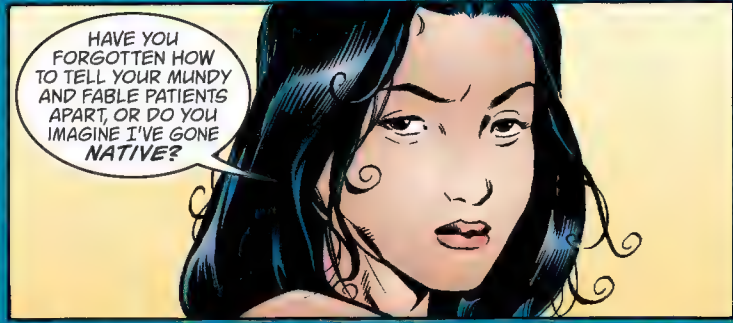




STOP RIGHT THERE, DOCTOR SWINEHEART.

DON'T YOU DARE FINISH THAT THOUGHT.

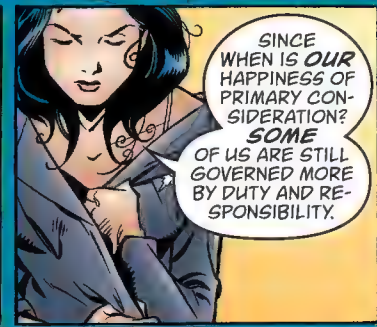
BUT I ONLY--



HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN HOW TO TELL YOUR MUNDY AND FABLE PATIENTS APART, OR DO YOU IMAGINE I'VE GONE NATIVE?



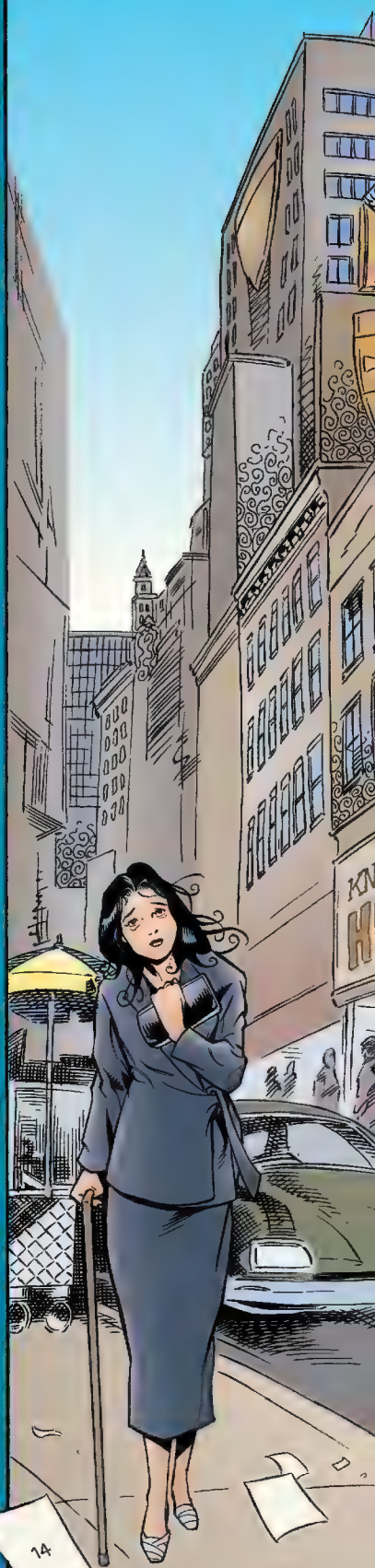
I BROUGHT IT UP BECAUSE IT'S OBVIOUS YOU'RE NOT HAPPY ABOUT--



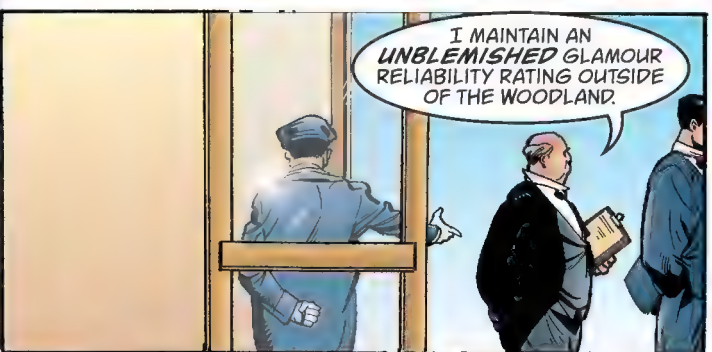
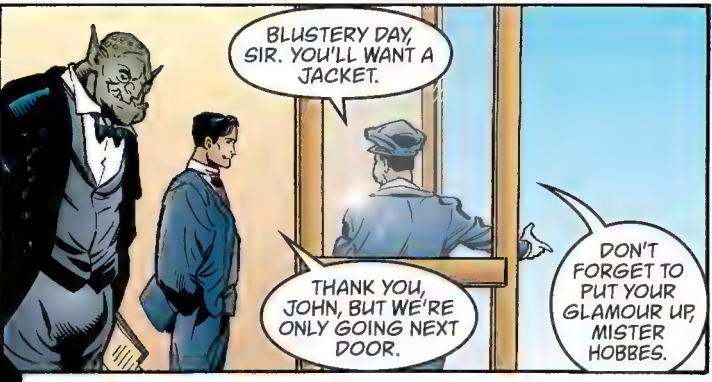
SINCE WHEN IS *OUR* HAPPINESS OF PRIMARY CONSIDERATION? *SOME* OF US ARE STILL GOVERNED MORE BY DUTY AND RESPONSIBILITY.



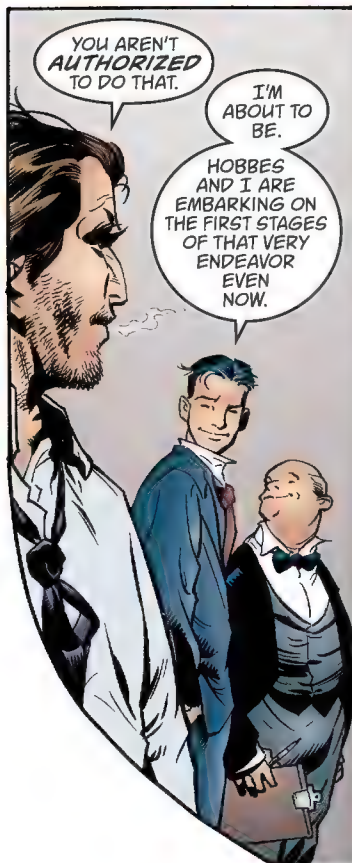
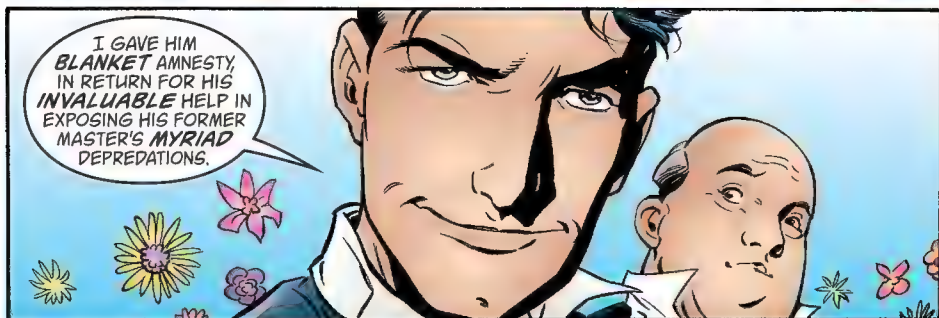
DON'T BRING IT UP AGAIN, DOCTOR, IF YOU WANT TO REMAIN PART OF FABLETOWN.









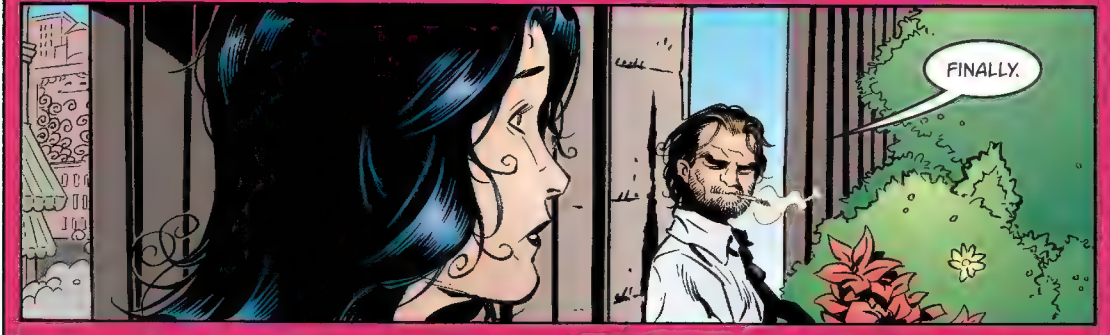
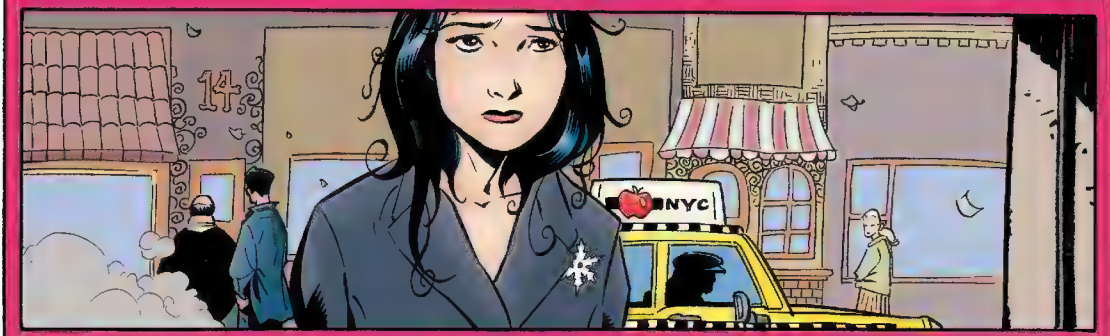




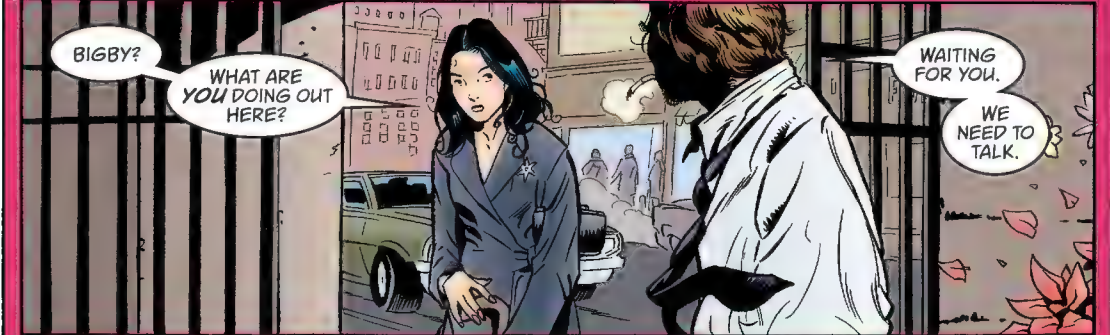


LET'S START WITH THE STREET-LEVEL SHOPS, BEFORE WE MOVE ON TO THE APARTMENTS ABOVE.

KEEP THE CHANGE.



FINALLY.

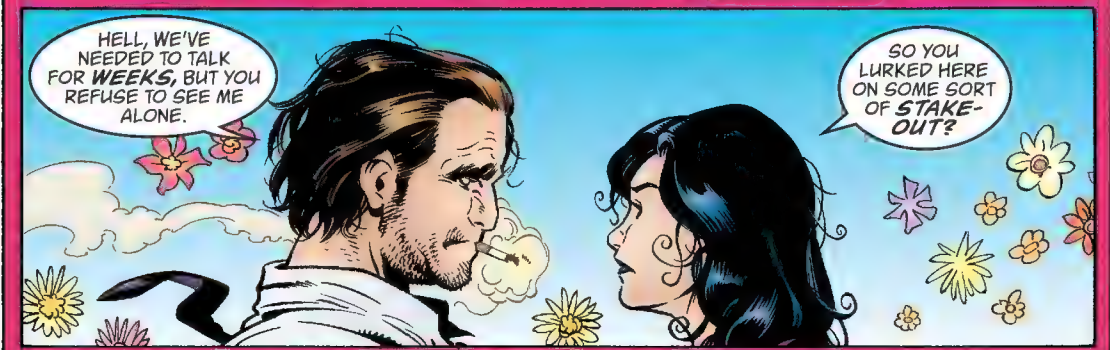


BIGBY?

WHAT ARE YOU DOING OUT HERE?

WAITING FOR YOU.

WE NEED TO TALK.



HELL, WE'VE NEEDED TO TALK FOR WEEKS, BUT YOU REFUSE TO SEE ME ALONE.

SO YOU LURKED HERE ON SOME SORT OF STAKE-OUT?



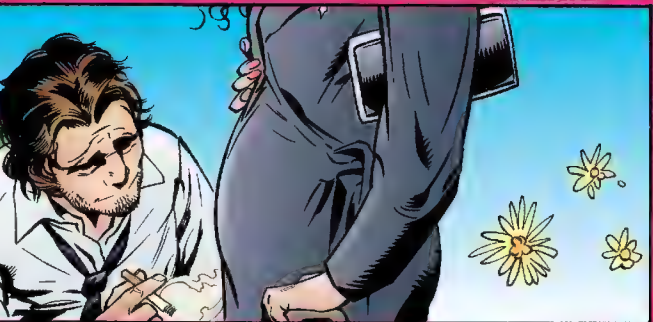


I KNEW YOU'D BE COMING BACK FROM YOUR DOCTOR'S APPOINTMENT ABOUT NOW.

I TOLD YOU, I NEED TIME ALONE FOR AWHILE.



FAIR ENOUGH-- TO A POINT, BUT I CAN'T LET YOU CUT ME OUT OF THIS ENTIRELY.



FOR BETTER OR WORSE, I'M THE FATHER OF THAT CUB GROWING IN YOUR BELLY, AND AS SUCH I HAVE *SOME* SAY IN THE PLANS YOU MAKE, NO MATTER *HOW* UNCOMFORTABLE WE ARE IN EACH OTHER'S COMPANY.

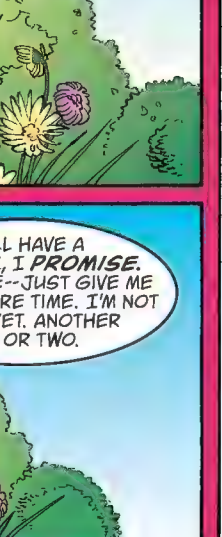


I--

YOU--

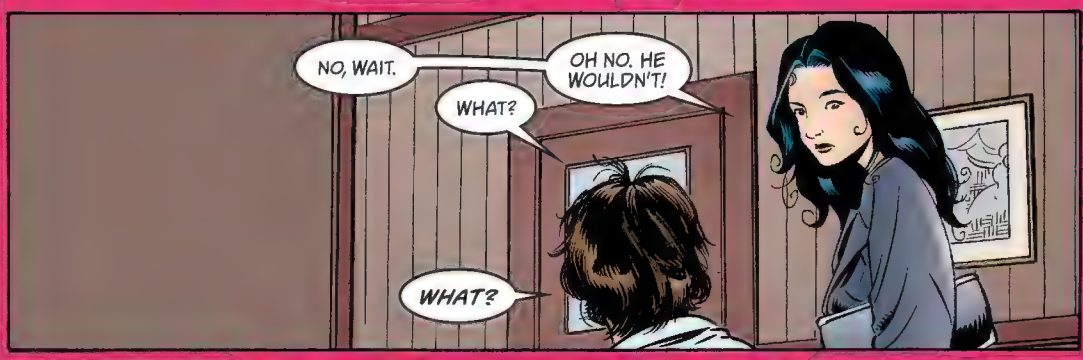
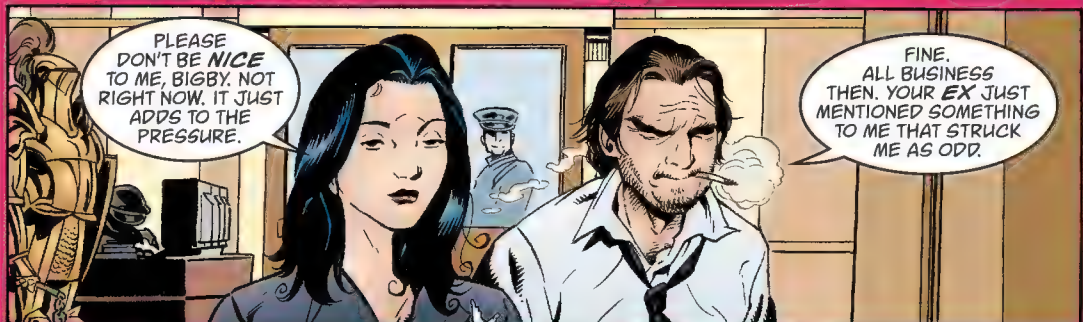
YES, YOU'RE RIGHT, OF COURSE.

YOU *DESERVE* A SAY, AND YOU'LL HAVE IT.



WE'LL HAVE A LONG TALK, I *PROMISE*. BUT PLEASE--JUST GIVE ME A LITTLE MORE TIME. I'M NOT READY YET. ANOTHER DAY OR TWO.









COME WITH ME.

BLUE!  
WHERE ARE YOU?

HE'S SLEEPING, MISSY WHITE.  
HE WAS UP ALL NIGHT.

THAT'S FINE, BUFKIN.  
YOU'LL DO.

FIND ME THE VOLUME ON FABLETOWN ELECTION RULES.

I CAN'T DO THAT. BLUEBEARD'S *GOB* BUTLER CHECKED IT OUT SOME TIME AGO.

OH DEAR LORD.

WILL ONE OF YOU PLEASE TELL ME WHAT'S GOING ON?

I'M NOT CERTAIN, BECAUSE IT'S NEVER COME UP BEFORE...

...BUT IF I REMEMBER CORRECTLY, ANY FABLETOWN CITIZEN CAN CALL FOR A SPECIAL ELECTION BY COLLECTING FIVE HUNDRED FABLE SIGNATURES.

I THINK MY EX-HUSBAND PLANS TO RUN FOR MAYOR.





DAYS PASS AND SPRING SETTLES IN TO STAY FOR AWHILE.

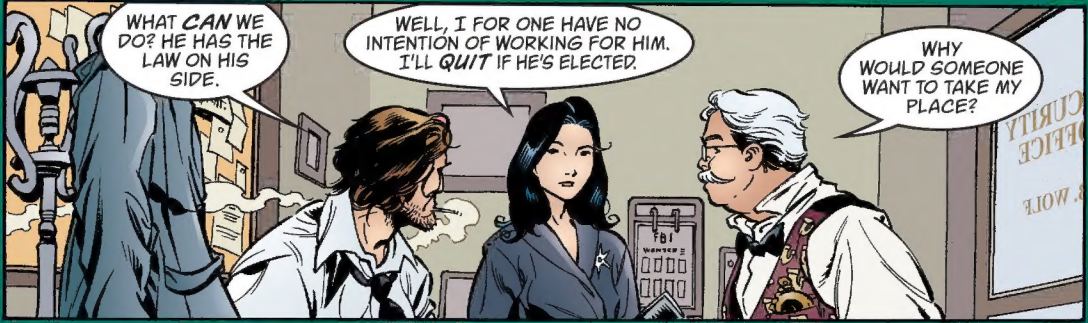
SO WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO ABOUT PRINCE CHARMING?



WHAT CAN WE DO? HE HAS THE LAW ON HIS SIDE.

WELL, I FOR ONE HAVE NO INTENTION OF WORKING FOR HIM. I'LL QUIT IF HE'S ELECTED.

WHY WOULD SOMEONE WANT TO TAKE MY PLACE?



HAVEN'T I DONE A GOOD JOB?

LET'S NOT JUMP THE GUN. HE HASN'T GOT THE SIGNATURES YET. BUT I SHOULD MENTION THAT, IF YOU HADN'T GIVEN HIM A FREE PASS ON THE BLUEBEARD MESS, WE'D HAVE MORE OPTIONS NOW.

STAP TAP TAP



SORRY TO INTERRUPT, BUT THERE'S QUITE A COMMOTION OUTSIDE--SOMETHING I THINK YOU'LL WANT TO SEE.

WHAT NOW?



MORE TROUBLES TO PLAGUE US, NO DOUBT.

THEY DO COME IN THREES.

SUPERSTITION.



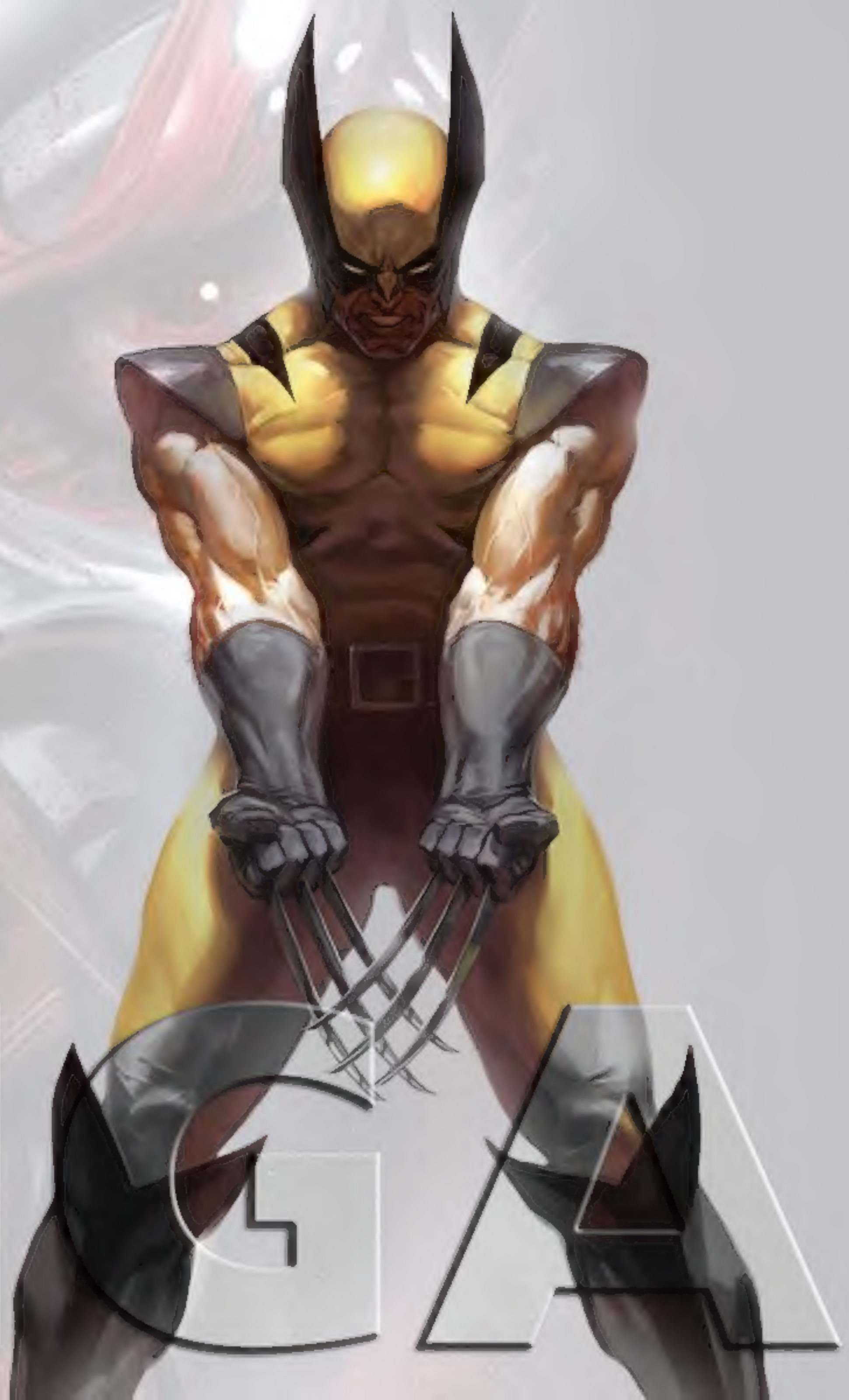


HELLO. MY NAME IS RED RIDING HOOD AND I'VE RECENTLY ESCAPED FROM THE EMPIRE.

I FORMALLY REQUEST SANCTUARY IN FABLETOWN.

**NEXT:  
MANY  
REUNIONS**





NATHAN